

HELPING CHILDREN & MIDDLE SCHOOLERS be more mindful and centered together

Hold hands in a circle and simply be quiet for a minute or two.

Encourage them to listen to the world around them. Go around the circle and invite each child to name something that they heard. This can be done anytime during the day.

Walk mindfully between any destinations.

Encourage them to hold their hands in the traditional Buddhist prayer position, with their thumbs up against their chest, and to feel every part of their foot as it touches the ground and then lifts off of the ground.

Again, holding the silence is very helpful. Can be done between any destinations.

Sit in a circle and do the “Hook Up.”

Sit on the floor or ground (if possible) with feet straight out in front. Cross one leg over the other. Hold arms straight out in front at shoulder height, cross one arm over the other and then reach around in order to clasp hands (with fingers intertwined). Continue to hold onto hands, while pulling them in close to the chest and the up towards the collarbone – rotating wrists so that hands can rest on the sternum, with elbows tucked into the body. Touch tongue to the roof of mouth and breathe deeply with eyes gently shut or slightly open. Hold this position for a minute or so, through several breaths. This is very calming.

Breathe Together.

Partners turn to face each other. Raise hands out in front, palms facing partner, at about shoulder height.

Stand close enough that your palms gently touch your partner’s hands. Close your eyes and breathe calmly. Pay attention and with help of touch, try to bring your breathing into synch with your partner’s.

Continue for a minute or so. Invite everyone to open their eyes and smile at their partner. Ask how many felt they had found a rhythm of breathing together. Invite comments, reflections, advise, etc.

Sing a simple song or round.

Rounds are great because everyone has to listen to each other, harmonies are created, and the words tend to be simple. If you sing something 3 or 4 times, have the 2nd one be louder and the last one be just a whisper. Hold the silence for a little while after finishing the song.

Share each other’s peaceful moments in the day.

Post newsprint or poster board and invite each child to share something at the end of every day that was beautiful, peaceful, calming, Light-filled, or connected to that of God. Keep a list going for several days that invites and reminds them to reflect on their day and to be more mindful during the day.

Meditative Art

Use clay, writing utensils, paper, paint, watercolors, scissors, pipe cleaners, sand....the possibilities are endless! Start with a little silence, holding the medium in your hands if possible, closing your eyes, and quieting your mind. (If making bread, etc, you can start by putting both hands on the counter.) Encourage

children to work with the medium *and the Spirit* in creating, not fretting as much on the outcome as being fully engaged in the process. The creative *river* is akin to prayer and unprogrammed worship. Encourage children to work in silence as much as possible. Having music playing in the background, preferably without words – or at least words in their language – is very helpful. Share experiences at the end, concentrating more on what it *felt like* than the finished product.

Go Outside

Go outside and ask everyone to find their own spots to be quiet by themselves for a few minutes. Encourage them to try and quiet their thoughts and just pay attention to the moment. If done regularly, their minds may begin to settle as soon as they go to their spots.

Mindful Eating or Drinking

Do either or both slowly.....in silence.....paying attention to taste, texture, and gratitude for being fed and the gift of being able to feed and nourish oneself.

Blow Bubbles

Bubbles are always wonderful, but blowing them (rather than waving them) helps us breath, too.

Dance

This can be wonderful done freely, together.....many children and teens are not comfortable doing this one, though.

Sounding Gongs or Bells

Listen to three soundings of a gong or bell – trying to notice when the sound “ends.” If these bells or gong sounds happen throughout the day, everyone can stop what they are doing whenever they hear the first one, simply breathing and listening until the last one stops.